DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 115 609 SP 009 678

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TITLE Existentialism and Open Education: Divorce American Style.
PUB DATE 31 Oct 75
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the National Conference of the American Educational Studies Association (San Francisco, California, October 31, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Existentialism; Individualism; Individualized Programs; *Open Education; Philosophy; Student Centered Curriculum; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to provide an insight into a possible relationship between open education and existentialism. The first section of this paper broadly defines the concept of open education as a search for a more meaningful approach to learning. This section then defines open education more specifically through the use of the following six learning assumptions: (1) motivation, (2) conditions for learning, (3) social learning, (4) intellectual development, (5) evaluation, and (6) assumptions about knowledge. There follows a discussion of the philosophical basis of open education and how it can eventually be related to existentialism. The second section of the paper details, at some length, the intellectual importance of another paper which presents the argument that, in order for existentialism to be applied to education, what is initially required is the redefining or reinterpretation of the notion of education. This section also attempts to answer the question of whether or not existentialism can be applied to education. Section 3 examines how the open classroom teacher views his/her professional role based on the six previously listed learning assumptions. It also discusses how this new teacher role is based on themes peculiar to an existential interpretation. (BD)

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# EXISTENTIALISM AND OPEN EDUCATION: DIVORCE AMERICAN STYLE

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SP009 618

Paper read at the American Educational Studies Association National Conference in San Francisco on October 31, 1975.

# EXISTENTIALISM AND OPEN EDUCATION: DIVORCE AMERICAN STYLE

*Gene Thibadeau*

## THE INITIAL DIFFICULTY

The open education movement, which blitzed the contemporary American scene in the late sixties, and has broken all records (at least for modern times) in the speed with which it established itself as an alternative to traditional schooling, is a phenomenon that defies easy analysis. Much of its success resulted from its attentiveness to human values wherein cognitive experiences are not of paramount importance, and yet it was as a booster to low academic achievement, particularly with disadvantaged students in our urban areas, that open education achieved its swift renown. The huge and instant popularity of the open approach, however, was less dependent on its probity of expression, certainly, than the sense of release it afforded both the student and the teacher. It does seem that the more popular an innovation becomes, the more difficult it is to define.

In fact, open education, like education in general, evades precise definition. There are great differences of opinion as to what stands for open education, as practices implemented in one school are frequently ignored in others, and successes and failures have not received the attention they deserve. Actually, the contents of the subject area are quite diverse which is the initial difficulty: This new approach to

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learning is applicable to all levels of education from early childhood programs in elementary schools to graduate internships at the university. A second difficulty arises from the fact that individual teachers are currently involved in the process of "working-out" effective teaching strategies so that one is, naturally somewhat reluctant to provide a definition.[1] In addition, open educationists see themselves as anti-dogmatists and argue that the definition of open education is open-ended: We cannot set this innovation too strongly within the limits of a definition, as hypotheses, and a habit of seeking verification for them, will continuously add to the content of our definition.[2] Finally, there are such things as feelings, acts of will, and convictions that cannot be placed within the confines of a definition and if we try to conceptualize them, to bring them to us by means of their specific characteristics, then they seep away from us. It is as though we grasp at a void.

Yes, open educators do see themselves as witnesses--witnesses who refuse to supply a specific definition to the open classroom while reaching some insights, some cautionary guidelines out of purely personal experiences.[3] Notwithstanding the diversity of its application, however, we require a model that we will be able to use in our learning situation, where it is reasonable to use it, and not have to improvise policy as we go along. This is recognized in Fred Sloan's "Open Education American Style" when he states, "It is the intent of this article to point out...a distinctly American open education model most suitable for our needs, expectations, facilities and clientele!"[4] Sloan identifies and analyzes categories common to the process of schooling and shows us

how we can adapt traditional methods to the open learning attitude. For example, he compares a graded organizational pattern to a nongraded organizational pattern, group-paced learning experiences to self-paced learning experiences, restricted space to the use of open space, subject-centered education to life-centered education--to name but a few.

Sloan's model is justified as there is, surprisingly, much agreement among theorists as to the central categories evident in an open classroom. Rathbone, Barth, Ellison, Short, Vincent Rogers, Hapgood, and many others agree that while the open education story is the story of a search for a more meaningful approach to learning it is, nevertheless, definable within the broad avenues, the main categories peculiar to all successful open classroom environments, namely, the organization of space, of time, of students, of instruction, and of learning materials.[5] In addition, the theoretical camp within this movement recognizes that there is a purely intellectual power to be gained in the task of identifying some of the important underlying assumptions contained within this categorical structure and in discriminating between them.[6] This task was undertaken by Barth initially in his article "Open Education--Assumptions About Learning" where he listed nine assumptions underlying open education techniques and more recently in his bestseller Open Education in the American School where he expanded the original nine to twenty-nine.[7]

True, there is no consensus as to what open education specifically stands for, but that does not, by itself abrogate the use of the term although the user of the term ought to be required to delimit his concept of openness, its basic assumptions, and the objectives, understandings, and attitudes inherent within those assumptions. Today, articles

on open education are reaching epidemic proportions[8] although far too few of them have attempted to analyze the underlying assumptions upon which open classroom practices rest, a situation now somewhat corrected by Barth who viewed his task as "laying bare some of these assumptions, (in order that) present advocates of open education will move further away from the realm of ideology, cult, mystique, or technique toward the more rational realm of coherent theory or philosophy."[9] Barth's assumptions, which have been organized under the general headings of Motivation, Conditions for Learning, Social Learning, Intellectual Development, Evaluation, and Assumptions About Knowledge are what I have chosen to call open education. These six themes are consistent with the eight statements on open education which were empirically derived by Walberg and Thomas[10] and they were selected as the content on which Reschly and Sabers structured their attitude scale.[11] Although Barth's twenty-nine statements are endorsed by most open educators, I do not wish to claim that they can be utilized as a definite statement on the meaning of open education. Instead, my purpose here is to focus on one particular interpretation which will act as a basis for a comparison between the open education thesis and contemporary existentialism.

There is evidence that the more demanding advocates of this movement have been, for some time, aware of similarities between open education and existentialism. In his informative and well-written article, "Examining the Open Education Classroom," Rathbone, one of the early advocates of the American open education movement and a leader in explicating its principles, makes the following statement: "Although descriptive analysis of the observable features of an educational

environment is useful, it is also limited. For, in so far as classroom practices derive from pedagogical and philosophical belief, any attempt to separate its practical reality from the teacher's idealistic intent tends to distort the observer's perspective on both. The difficult task is to distinguish fact (what *actually* occurs or exists) from expectation (what someone *thinks* will occur or exist) from intent (what someone *wants* to have happen). To this point, the present description has set forth, uncritically, many expectations and hopes of open education proponents...Investigation of a somewhat different order might examine open education in the light of European existentialism. In an effort to determine the degree to which their conceptualization of choice and freedom was similar, such a study could also examine the relevance of existential psychiatry to open education."[12]

This directive is supported in the literature as other theorists, after critically examining open education principles, sometimes make references to existentialism as the source for the movement--yes, even those that seek to question rather than support, view its philosophical roots as being planted within existentialism: Russell L. Hann's "What Do You Mean, Open Education?" notes that the notion of openness "seems to have filtered into educational literature with the increasing attention being given to the existential."[13] Those remaining theorists that do not direct our attention to existentialism do nevertheless cite the need for a philosophical analysis in order to provide a supportive base and foundation to the movement. David N. Campbell's "Open Education and the Open Classroom: A Conceptual Analysis" tells us that philosophers of education ought to apply their expertise in helping to analyze changes

that open education opts for but, instead, they have not met this responsibility and "this situation is indeed unfortunate, for what is most needed for the new educators is a coherent philosophy which will clarify the bases for open education."[14] It can be convincingly argued and substantiated that open educators, themselves, recognize the need for a philosophical structure to accompany practices and several significant spokesman have identified existentialism as the one priority area that ought to be investigated for open education's philosophical roots.

Now, the genesis of this paper grew out of my exposure to open education practices and mispractices in rural school districts in Western Pennsylvania and in urban classrooms in the New York metropolitan area and, in addition, a research project that required an extensive survey of open education literature. Although I frequently encountered the claim that the open education approach touches on and makes use of many of the themes central to the existential bias, the literature on the improbability of accurately relating existentialism to education convinced me that it would be extremely inadvisable for anyone to attempt to equate these two movements. Furthermore, it was obvious to me that the open education movement is in the embryo stage, that it has yet to prove itself to the satisfaction of its many demanding advocates and many critics, that, as Katz has observed, "openness, like freedom, cannot be absolutely defined,"[15] and, finally, that additional definitional work would be required as new insights and principles are tested and adopted. Therefore, it was my understanding that any attempt by an educator to argue from the perspective of finality, to argue that a particular philosophy, such

as existentialism, by itself, is the basis for open education, ought to be viewed with the utmost suspicion. This understanding has recently been challenged. In the last PLS meeting, Professor Troutner presented a possible solution to this dilemma noting that in order for existentialism to be applied to education what is initially required is the redefining or reinterpretation of the notion of education.[16] As Troutner's contentions are central to my concern here today, the next section will detail, at some length, the intellectual import of his paper and answer the question "Can existentialism be applied to education?" The remainder of this paper--the third section--examines how the open classroom teacher views her professional role based on Barth's learning assumptions and draws connectives, theoretical similarities, and significant areas of agreement upon which one could state with some validity that this new role of the teacher is based on themes peculiar to an existential interpretation. My initial concern, therefore, was to tarry a moment over the matter of a definition as a general characterization of this movement is possible and will be helpful to our study. No claim, however, is made here that this paper can, by itself, suffice to provide the reader with a sufficient understanding of the philosophical basis of open education or, for that matter, how it will be eventually related to existentialism. This paper does provide an insight into a possible relationship between open education and existentialism and should be read as an introductory statement, subject to later development and articulation.

THE APPLICATION PROBLEM

The literature on the relationship between existentialism and education, which has grown into quite a substantial corpus in the last 20 years, has especially prided itself on focusing attention on the educational relevance of many of the themes common to the existential bias--authenticity, freedom, choice, etc. It is a very humanistic-oriented kind of education towards which some of our more talented writers on educational philosophy have been working. Yet many of these same writers have been surprisingly timid about inquiries into the difficulty of applying existential principles to the traditional classroom and to the extent to which they have discussed the application problem at all, most writers have simply assumed that "a viable connection between existential thought and education as schooling not only can be made but already has been made, and all that needs to be done is to extend and elaborate on it."[17] In a recent paper, "Making Sense out of Existential Thought in Education: A Search for the Interface," Troutner identifies a notable exception and, yes, Bruce Baker did examine more thoroughly than others his own growing awareness of the harmful effects of attempting to bend existentialism to the practices of education.[18] Baker has many intellectual and personal thoughts to impart to us concerning our disservice to existential ideas and concepts, expecially those exercised as pragmatic and practical. To be sure the trouble with the majority of past efforts is that in attempting to give us the existential source, they become procrustean exercises: The evidence is chopped to fit the theory, the theory is stretched to meet the dimensions of the problem.

For example, most manuscripts begin by explicating some basic principles of the existential thesis and then relate these principles to the teaching enterprise.[19] This approach is characteristic of past attempts and, in fact,

of all previous attempts to relate philosophy in general to education, that is, the drawing of direct implications from the philosophy in question for their relevance to educational practices. However, there is, to use Troutner's term, an interface between traditional philosophies, such as, idealism and realism, and their subsequent philosophical import for the process of schooling, but existentialism, with its unique and different view of epistemology, cannot be objectified, cannot be taught. Troutner observes that "there seems (to be) little common ground between traditional education with its focus on transmitting the cultural heritage of the past, to the teaching of subject matter by society's agent, the teacher, and existential thought with its focus on human existence as lived."[20] With the possible exceptions of Nietzsche, Ortega and Jaspers, who showed only a tangential interest in education,[21] most existential philosophers are not really interested in education because their paramount concern, in an existential sense, is to bring one to an awareness, a new way of thinking, about themselves and their reality. Differences in areas of concern and the use of language led Troutner to conclude that there is an "incompatability of existential thought and schooling"[22] and that forced attempts to deduce educational practices from existential theory result in vague statements, generalizations and over simplifications.

There is evidence that two of the best-known early explicators are aware that attempts to relate existential themes to educational practices might result in distortions and misinterpretations. For example, one of the strongest arguments designed to show that existentialism cannot be meaningfully related to education first directs our attention to the inauthentic character of modern society--its conformity, superficiality and lack of genuineness--and then proceeds to argue that the extent to which society in inauthentic is also mirrored in our schools, as schools are a part of the conditioned bias of the society in

which they exist. It is self-defeating, therefore, to attempt to teach existentialism in this inauthentic school situation.[23] A second argument recognizes that education is, very decidedly, a social activity, but Sartre's extreme individualism makes it quite impossible to relate his philosophy to education though there is indeed a tendency to identify existentialism with him. Actually, out of all contemporary existential European writers, Sartre's unique position prohibits us from looking to him in attempting to identify reasons which prompted Kneller to maintain that because America is conditioned by a pragmatic orientation while, at the same time, existentialism places a priority on the authentic individual, then the *existentiale* mode of being-in has no relevance to educational theory.[24] And, as Morris stated in his best seller, *Existentialism and Education*, "we might even conclude that existentialism would have no traffic with education in any shape or form. Indeed, the case might even be developed that existentialism is the very denial of education as we understand it today."[25] Kneller and Morris are, of course, aware that their labored conclusion and drawn implications are, given the context of American education, subjective hypothetical deductions which they themselves have formulated.

Baker, in his noteworthy 1964 dissertation, stated that "the conclusions which Kneller and Morris have at least tentatively accepted, that existentialism is relevant neither to American society nor to education, is a product of their own construction of the attempt to relate existentialism to education. Yet just because Kneller, Morris, *et. al.*, fail to establish such a relation, this does not mean that there can be no relation at all. There may be a totally different approach to this relation which avoids the conclusion reached by Kneller and Morris. Such an approach would first of all not see education as fundamentally a classroom activity restricted primarily to the elementary and secondary level . . .[26] Baker's attempt to substantiate this statement is,

briefly, as follows: He begins by restating Morris' claim that social reconstruction can be realized either by improving social institutions or by the improvement of individuals within society. According to Baker, we have here a false dichotomy, an either/or argument. He states that "There need not be a necessary choice between two opposite alternatives, for many existentialists claim that it is only through the later that the former may be achieved and that this is the only meaningful way of affecting social reconstruction that goes to the route of the problem--the individual members of society."[27] Instead of viewing social reconstruction as either working toward the improvement of social institutions or the improvement of individuals within society, Baker directs us to concentrate on combating inauthenticity on the individual level in institutions of society, such as, the educational system. He argues that the notion of schooling has to be redefined in order to create an environment designed to encourage and allow the student to develop his authentic self. He makes a distinction between schooling and education; education is now construed to be not simply a formal assimilation of knowledge which transpires in an instructional framework, but rather, a process of learning and development which never ceases. Education is to be defined as the process of man's quest for authenticity and meaning during his own unique existence, so that one is considered to be educated only when one is an authentic person. The notion of authenticity is defined as an awareness on the part of the individual of his personal responsibility to choose his own existence and give it meaning.[28] Education, then, is defined as the process for man's quest for authenticity and meaning in his own life, a task which involves a person's whole-lived experience and not merely his experience in the school. Baker's notion of education allows for a meaningful relationship between existentialism and education as the process of choosing authenticity requires a discussion of existential themes in education on the same level of philosophic discourse.[29]

Admittedly, the problem to be solved is that which caused great concern to past and contemporary explicators on the relationship between existentialism and education, namely, the problem of individual choice which is seen as a destructive ingredient in any social interpretation of the role of the school. Baker's reply is that "the fundamental problem of relating existentialism to education has really not yet been touched at its center, namely, the relations between the Individual Choices of authenticity, or the relations between the individual and 'the other.' Such a stress upon the individual in existentialism was what gave rise to Morris' observation that it may be impossible to relate existentialism to education at all." Sartre's one-sided views on the nature of human relationships are examined in a rather lengthy section of the second chapter of Baker's dissertation in order to convince the reader that Sartre is least among contemporary existentialists as the one we ought to look to for an existential philosophy of education.[30] It is the failure to go outside one's self, in the Sartrian model, and participate in a mutual, personal relation 'between' one person and another that renders Sartre's views "inappropriate" to education and characterizes it on the I-It attitude of Buber." Buber's notion of education is seen by Baker as quite different and unique when compared to our contemporary understanding of schooling and it is this model that Baker opts for. He details the notion of education for character relative to Buber's I-Thou philosophy.[31] According to Buber "man exists anthropologically not in his isolation but in the completeness of the relation between man and man; what humanity is can be grasped only in vital reciprocity."[32] Buber maintained that authenticity can only be achieved through one's own concern for the Other; "the help that men give each other in becoming a self leads the life between men to its height."[33] Hence, education is not to be viewed as an institutionalized activity. Nor, as Baker points out, can it be a institutional activity but instead it is to be defined as a process "between two

persons in the I-Thou relation."[34] In this model, the student's subjective quest for authenticity and meaning negates the possibility of attempting to detail specific educational practices but that does not prohibit or deny a theoretical application of existential goals to this new definition of what it means to be educated. Baker emphasizes that Buber is dealing with the "principium" of education, the foundational philosophical framework within which educational policies and practices will be later formulated.

Up to this point I have briefly sketched some of the problems involved in attempting to relate existentialism to education and summarized the gist of Baker's contention that the application problems can be circumvented if we first redefine the notion of education and look to the Buber model for the implementation of existential themes in the classroom. In Troutner's paper, previously referred to, he recognizes the importance of Baker's dissertation and refers to this non-institutionalized concept of education as simply "the process of being educated,"[35] which, as we have seen, bears no logical connection whatsoever with schooling or teaching in the traditional sense and, in fact, entails a life-long process on the part of the student to seek out his own authenticity. It is obvious that Troutner believes that existential thought itself holds possible insights and implications for the lived-reality of this new unique concept of education. He wrote that "existential thought may have little to say about the institution of schooling in a traditional sense but it would seem to have something important to contribute to our understanding of this life-long process of 'being-educated' that each of us experiences in our lived reality."[36] In a footnote, he directs us to examine the open classroom philosophy for a "common ground between existential thought and education."[37] He maintains that Barth's

learning assumptions "jive very nicely with basic existential principles and concerns."[38]

Baker does examine in some detail Buber's use of the I-Thou distinction in the attitude of the role of the teacher and in teacher-student relationships, a distinction which has received further clarification in recent publications.[39] Buber, himself, was reluctant to specify specific educational policies and practices as he understood that such policies and practices would depend upon the circumstances peculiar to the learning situation and the results of empirical educational research. The remainder of this paper will test the validity of maintaining that, notwithstanding the status of the movement and problems of definition, open education can be viewed as a prototype of this non-traditional notion of education. There are a number of striking "family resemblances" between existentialism and open education which will be briefly surveyed in the next and final section, namely, those concerned with the role of the teacher. Understandably, this section is incomplete and awaits further clarification and more detailed analysis although it will make clear to the reader some of the similarities alluded to by Troutner.

## FAMILY RESEMBLANCES

The open classroom is, first of all, an attack on the notion of "frontal teaching: which requires the teacher to hold (or attempt to hold) the attention of the entire class at the same time as the combined lecturer, inquisitor, and performer. Frontal teaching is a hierarchal society where everything and everybody seemingly can and must be categorized, labeled, numbered, and evaluated. Armed with the axiom that frontal teaching is vastly overrated, the open educator seeks to avoid direct intellectual manipulation which, he

maintains, traditional schooling, by its very organization, cannot avoid. Open educators are universal in their cry for a different and unique role of the teacher as the philosophy is based on a radical change in the teacher-student relationship. This different and unique perspective of the teacher removes the aura and mystery of the so-called expert, of knowledge held exclusively, and the tendency of the teacher to create a veil of status and role between the adult and the students.

This philosophy is based on the belief that respect and trust between students and between students and the teacher can be achieved. Barth does recognize that the development of a mutual sense of trust is difficult to achieve and that "trust is a basic personality characteristic" which cannot be forced or simply adopted.[40] Hence, trust is the primary ingredient in the effective open classroom teacher's character and in the relationships that he shares with students. Therefore, the teacher must open himself to the students in order for there to be mutual personal feelings, with a maximum amount of honesty and directness, between one who wants to know and that person who is willing and able to help in the knowing process. Undoubtedly, the crucial element in the open classroom is the removal of this distance, as the teacher is expected to be only himself--open, direct, and honest. As Buber recognized, teachers are human beings who cannot divorce themselves from their attitudes and value commitments without destroying themselves as persons.[41] In his manuscript, The Open Classroom Teacher, Campbell sums it up quite nicely: "Authentic people are rare, for to become so requires one to unlearn those roles and expectations, i.e., they must undergo a continuing existential experience, otherwise they will invariably impose such unquestioned assumptions about life and living upon

their students. Perhaps some or much of this self-examination can be shared with one's students but we must rid ourselves of the allusion that we teach a 'subject;' rather we teach people and more often than the 'subject,' they take away a part of us."[42]

To fill this role there has to be a clear and definite commitment on the part of the teacher--teaching cannot be viewed as merely a sideline. Instead, it ought to be of fundamental concern to the open classroom teacher's very existence. What this means is that in presenting himself the teacher awakens the student's responsibility to himself, his teacher, his fellow students, his society, and the world. The purpose of teaching is then seen as helping the pupil to take charge of his own life, to make a unity of it, and not merely to be concerned with his own interests. Teaching involves the meeting of the "I" with the "Thou" which is, of course, "the taking of responsibility for his fellow man."[43] Teachers, then, help students to be more authentic; they assist the student in freeing himself from the influence of "Others" so that one is not easily manipulated, be it by the media, propaganda, or society. Students are individuals to be respected; therefore, the teacher will not consciously attempt to force his will, his values, on the students as portrayed in recent misinterpretations in the literature. For example, in an article titled "Teacher's Role--a Problem in Open Education," the author provides us with a confused and distorted notion of the teacher in the open classroom, i.e., "to avoid reversal of the authoritarian teacher role, the teacher 'cons' the student into choices considered appropriate."[44] The teacher's main role, according to Barth, is to assist in making it possible for a student to realize his inborn potentialities, to actualize himself, and the teacher who is authentic in his feelings will not be

involved in this kind of deception. It is only when the teacher relates to the student in a non-domineering attitude that the pupil fulfills himself in relation to what is right in his own manner.

Walberg and Thomas recognize that "the feelings and behavior of the open teacher cannot be easily categorized because her guiding principle is to respond as sensitively and reflectively as possible to the unique child at precise moments in the temporal stream and central *Gestalt* of her interaction with him. Open educators hold that the teacher and the child in complementary roles, should together fashion the child's school experience."[45] The teacher is cast in the role of patient guide, sensitive to the needs of each student and exhibits as much concern about their total development as their cognitive skills. In agreement with the existential bias, the cognitive is not placed superior to the affective or "lived-experiences" of the student. Kierkegaard said, "If real success is to attend effort to bring a man to a definite position, one must first of all take pains to find him where he is and begin there."[46] It is this belief that makes possible the open classroom teacher's concern in helping a child to realize his inborn potentialities, his actualizing self.

What open education becomes depends upon the teacher. To be sure, there are grave dangers. Hamm states: "If open education assumes an existential basis, the very attempt to systematize, organize, and specifically define the term is counterproductive: It flies in the face of existential openness. Openness is only a futile, but nonethelessa worthwhile goal of existential theory: There can only be movement toward openness. Just as freedom without responsibility to others and to consequences is nonsense, similarly openness becomes a paradox unless it is tied to

to educational ends as well as educational means. There are degrees of openness that cannot be determined *apriori*, but openness evolves in the context of interactive, subjective relationships."[47] Although there is some truth here, Hamm is, obviously, relating to the Sartrian model. There is no basis for making theoretical connections from existentialism to education when the later is viewed as a teaching of subject matter in a systematic, logical prodedure. Acutally, whether or not open education touches on the existential is dependent on how the teacher uses her role relative to the learning material. We are, now, back at the beginning of the well-trodder path of the subjective-objective distinction. If the teacher determines the material and, thereby, selects the "truth" inherent within the material, then obviously what we have here is, simply stated, a new methodology, a more humanistic way of imparting to the student what we, the teacher, believe to be worth knowing. Teachers that say, "This is meaningful material," and present it without cohesion--in the humanistic vein--nevertheless bring about direct manipulation and, in the final analysis, perform no real valuable service, no step forward in our quest for subjective learning. If, however, on the other hand, the student is given the choice, the responsibility, the freedom to make his own decision as to the kinds of learning material to be studied in the classroom, then, the student is at least allowed to derive his own truths, to arrive at a subjective understanding not only of the cognitive data but, more importantly, of himself. Then, the epistomological and eithical assumptions inherent within Barth's assumptions do point to the existential.

It is right for us to be skeptical because open education principles have, in many places, been hastily devised and instituted with the result that many of the open education programs in existence today are intellectually

disreputable and a discredit to the movement. We need to be aware of the difficulties that we face in attempting to bring new forms of experimental learning to the classroom. But let us not be too skeptical. Open education is not a logical derivative from existential theory while, at the same time, it makes use of many of its themes. Certain passages from the literature, such as, the concept of time in Rathbone's work, or Barth's view of moods as a medium for an understanding of oneself, are strikingly similar to European existentialism. It is its emphasis, however, on the unique status of the teacher, and the teacher-student relationship, with its notions of self-development, intrinsic motivation, subjectivity of "knowing," among others, that probably prompted Troutner to state that this non-traditional concept of education has striking similarities to existentialism that necessitate more detailed examination. The work that lies ahead will more than partially depend on the classroom practioner who will, as Buber understood, provide us with empirical data that will test the validity of existential claims and perhaps provide a solution to the application problem.

And now a word about the title--"Divorce American Style." We are all familiar with the movie which depicts the twentieth century phenomenon of divorce Italian style. Like many things Italian it is unique: They get divorced but they frequently continue to have the same family ties, sometimes they even sleep together. It is, yes, a continuum of emotions, of feelings felt and moments lost. Probably, because of our pragmatic orientation, divorce American style is something quite different. In comparison to the Italians, our American decision is clear-cut, the razor's edge. Americans that get divorced rarely remarry each other and, if statistics do not lie too much, we do try again. I was reminded of this

in writing this paper. It is much easier, so much safer, to say that there are similarities between open education and existentialism but that they fail to measure up at some distant locus on the intellectual landscape. Then, no one is really offended: Open education advocates who see themselves as pushing back a new frontier are now not tied to the roots of existential thinkers; while, on the other hand, existential purists do not have to see themselves as being brought down from the world of ideas to the common marketplace, the everyday reality of classroom practices. But, there are, simply stated, too many similarities for us to ignore and in the areas where theoretical connectives cannot be drawn there are no contradictions, but rather only voids, unsurveyed terrain. If one opts for the Buber model of education for character, then this non-traditional form of education places us squarely within the Italian phenomena. If, however, on the other hand, the open teacher rejects Buber's philosophy of education and controls the student without obnoxious coercion, then, regardless of the similarities, we are Divorced American Style.

FOOTNOTES

1. J. Featherstone, "Open Schools: The British and Us; Excerpts from Booklets, Informal Schools in Britain Today," New Republic 165 (1871): 20-25; also, B.B. Stretch, "Rise of the Free School," Saturday Review 53 (1970): 76-79.

2. David N. Campbell, "Open Education in the Open Classroom: A Conceptual Analysis," Focus on Learning 2 (Fall/Winter, 1972): 29-36. The author states: "Therefore, there is no such structure or plan to an open classroom. It will vary according to each situation and in response to the individuals which comprise the class or school community." See, also, Jenny C. Andreae and A. N. Pappalardo, "Open Education is Imported from England," New York University Education Quarterly 2 (Summer, 1971): 8-16.

3. David N. Campbell, A Practical Guide to the Open Classroom (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1973), p. 6.

4. Fred A. Sloan, "Open Education American Style," Peabody Journal of Education (January 1974): 140.

5. Thomas E. Gatewood, "How Effective are Open Classrooms? A Review of the Research," Childhood Education (January, 1975): 170-179. The author states that "While most of these definitions (open education) may vary on the surface in terms of degree, structure or emphasis, they all tend to reflect a common underlying set of ideas and themes that run as a thread through the open education movement."

6. R. S. Barth,"Open Education--Assumptions About Learning," Educational Philosophy and Theory 1 (1969): 29-39.

7. R. S. Barth, Open Education and the American School, (New York: Agathon Press, 1972). Barth's twenty-nine assumptions are listed and detailed in the first chapter of the text.

8. As of June, 1975, more than 1800 articles have appeared in Canadian, British, and United States periodicals.

9. R. S. Barth, "Open Education--Assumptions About Learning," op. cit., p. 29.

10. H. J. Walberg and S. C. Thomas, "Open Education: An Operational Definition and Validation in Great Britain and United States," American Educational Research Journal 9 (1972): 197-208.

11. Dan Reschly and Darrell Sabers, "Open Education: Have We Been There Before?" Phi Delta Kappan (June, 1974): 675-677. The authors provide an attitude scale in order to determine similarities between open and progressive education. Their results support "the assertion of a close correspondence between open and progressive education." They believe that the high "negative correlation between open and traditional education than between progressive and traditional education suggests that, if anything, open education represents as even more radical approach to educating children."

12. Charles H. Rathbone, "Examining the Open Education Classroom," School Review (August, 1972): 542.

13. Russell L. Hamm, "What Do You Mean, Open Education?" Contemporary Education (Spring, 1974): 229-231.

14. David N. Campbell, "Open Education in the Open Classroom," in Opening Up Education in Theory and Practice, ed. Gene Thibadeau (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1976), in press.

15. L.P. Katz, Research on Open Education: Problems and Issues, (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1972).

16. L.F. Troutner, "Making Sense of 'Existential Thought and Education': A Search for the Interface," paper read at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society, 1975, Kansas City, Kansas.

17. Ibid., p.3.

18. Bruce French Baker, On the Possibility of the Relation Between Existentialism and Education, (Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University) Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilm, 1964. No. 64-12248.

19. The obvious examples are George F. Kneller, Existentialism and Education (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1958); Van Cleve Morris, Existentialism in Education (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966).

20. L.F. Troutner, op. cit., p.7.

21. Specifically, Nietzsche's On the Future of Our Educational Institutions, Ortega's The Mission of the University and Jaspers' The Idea of the University.

22. L.F. Troutner, op. cit., p.5.

23. See Baker's discussion, op. cit., p.135.

24. George F. Kneller, Existentialism and Education, op. cit., p. 152: Also Troutner, op. cit., pp. 7-9, 12; For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Baker, op. cit., pp. 28-31 and 62-75.

25. Van Cleve Morris, "Existentialism in Education", in Joe Park, ed., Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Education, second edition (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 551-552.

26. B.F. Baker, op. cit., p.75.

27. Ibid., p.76.

28. B.F. Baker, op. cit., p. 396. It is instructive to compare Buber's notion of authenticity in contrast to Heidegger's prospective on authenticity as detailed in Marc Broid, The Primacy of Discourse in Determining the Sense of Heidegger's Authenticity: Ground For a Sensitive Education; (Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University) Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilm, 1968.

29. See Troutner, op. cit., pp. 11-12 for a discussion of this point.

30. B.F. Baker, op. cit., pp. 155-227.

31. Ibid., pp. 263-291 and especially pp. 397-399.

32. Martin Buber, I and thou, second edition, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 4. Quoted in Baker, op. cit., p. 395.

33. M. Buber, "Elements of the Interhuman," Psychiatry 20 (May, 1957): 112.

34. B.F. Baker, op. cit., pp.398-399.

35. L.F. Troutner, op. cit., p.9.

36. Ibid., p. 11.

37. Ibid., p.17.

38. Ibid., pp.17-18.

39. There are numerous references; see, for example E. D. Kiner, "Some Problems in a Buber Model for Teaching." Educational Theory, 19 (Fall, 1969). pp. 296-403.

40. R.S. Barth, Open Education and the American School, op. cit., p. 27.

41. Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 100-102.

42. David M. Campbell, A Practical Guide to The Open Classroom, op. cit., p. 39.

43. M. Buber, Between Man and Man, op. cit., p.193.

44. Eldon G. and Georgia H. Scriven, "Teacher Role - A Problem in Open Education," Contemporary Education 45 (Summer, 1974) p. 303.

45. H.S. Walberg and S.C. Thomas, "Open Education: An Operational Definition and Validation in Great Britain and United States," op. cit., p. 206.

46. Robert Bretall, ed., A Kierkegaard Anthology (New York: The Modern Library, 1936), p. 227.

47. R.L. Hamm, "What Do You Mean, Open Education?" op. cit., p.231.